DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 149 316 CS 003 893

TITLE	Intensive Reading Instructional Teams (IRIT), 1975-76.
INSTITUTION	Hartford Public Schools, Conn.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	19p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Education; Grade 3; Grade 4; Independent Reading; Language Development; *Program Evaluation; *Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; Reading Skills; Student Attitudes; *Supplementary Education

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the evaluation of the Intensive Reading Instructional Team (IRIT) program, a supplementary reading and language development program for third and fourth graders in the Hartford, Connecticut, public schools. The IRIT program and evaluation design are described, with tables illustrating evaluation data. Results indicate that the program has exceeded its goals in all measures: more than 75% of the students met vocabulary and comprehension objectives; 96% of the students met five other achievement objectives; and informal surveys of parents and classroom teachers indicate a definite improvement in students' attitudes toward reading and school. Two appendixes list parent and teacher evaluations of the IRIT program. (RL)

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Hartford Public Schools
1975-76 Compensatory Education Program Evaluation

Program Title: INTENSIVE READING INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS (IRIT)

Program Director:
Mrs. M. Beatrice Wood

Program Staff:
9 Professional
2 Clerical

Funding:
SADC $208,185.

Pupils Served:
Number 401
Grades 3, 4

CONTENTS

I. Program Description 1

II. Evaluation Design 4

III. Evaluation of Data 6

A. Achievement Testing 6
B. Attitude Survey 9

IV. Summary 9

V. Recommendations 9

VI. Appendix 10

CSDD3 893

Evaluator: Evaluation Office, Hartford Public Schools

INTENSIVE READING INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

I. Program Description

Intensive Reading Instructional Team (IRIT) is a supplementary reading and language development program for elementary school pupils who are educationally disadvantaged and deficient in reading and language skills. IRIT has been providing exemplary service since its inception. The United States Office of Education recognized its accomplishments in the 1974-75 school year in a ceremony for outstanding compensatory programs recommended for replication throughout the United States.

Three Instructional Teams taught reading to 401 pupils in the third and fourth grades. The program is administered in three cycles. For eleven weeks each pupil spends the morning in IRIT and returns to his regular class in the afternoon for instruction in other subjects. A few children are bused to the schools where the program is offered.

Each Instructional Team consisted of a team leader who is a certified reading consultant, two master teachers with strong backgrounds in reading, and a clerk-typist.

Each of the three teachers in a team instructed students in one of three areas: decoding, individualized reading, or vocabulary and comprehension development. Each morning, students in the program spend about one hour with each of the teachers in turn. The program is individualized.

A number of activities were undertaken especially to encourage reading at home:

- Crossword puzzle books and other consumable materials were kept by the children at home to be completed during their free time.

- Students were given an opportunity to order books and records to build their home libraries. A lending library was set up in the IRIT centers and children were encouraged to borrow books for reading at home.

- The Clark and Wish teams compiled a booklet of summer reading activities for the students to take home at the end of the year, to give practice and to help retain reading skills.

- The Jones Team prepared a booklet for the students' use at home. This included an introduction by the teachers to each consonant cluster, games to play, riddles to solve, and puzzles to complete.

Team members helped classroom teachers by conferring with teachers about individual students, loaning professional books and journals, discussing problems about the teaching of reading, and devising materials to be used in the classroom.

The IRIT centers were used as demonstration centers for teachers, out-of-state administrators, and personnel interested in the educational field with an emphasis on reading. For instance, the Wish Reading Team provided an opportunity for students from Saint Joseph College to observe the IRIT program.

The IRIT made special efforts to communicate with parents.

- An OPEN HOUSE was held during each cycle for the parents and school staff to familiarize the public with the IRIT program.

- An IRIT Newspaper was published during each cycle and given to each student. This included children's original stories and poems as well as activities of seasonal interest.

- The Wish IRIT contributed articles pertaining to the reading program for publication in "The Neighborhood Newspaper". In this manner, the public was informed of the functions, the activities, and how the children benefited from the special services of the IRIT.

- Pictures of the students at work were distributed at an IRIT graduation at the end of each cycle.

Table I

Number of Pupils Served in IRIT
by Grade, School, Cycle, and Teaching Team

Grade 3, 225 pupils tested*

Cycle	Team A	Team B	Team C	Total
1	F.O.Jones 44	Hooker 56	Clark 24	124
2	F.O.Jones 0	Wish 21	Clark 27	48
3	Barnard-Brown 18	Waverly 13	Arsenal 22	53

Grade 4, 165 pupils tested*

Cycle	Team A	Team B	Team C	Total
1	F.O.Jones 43	Hooker 29**	Clark 19	48
2	F.O.Jones 0	Wish 6	Clark 16	65
3	Barnard Brown 26	Waverly 4	Arsenal 22	52
Total	131	129	130	390*

* Also served: seven third-graders and four fourth graders, for a total of 401 pupils served, for whom complete California Achievement Test scores were not obtained.

** This group includes one fifth grader.

II. Evaluation Design

The evaluation design is given in Table II. The performance objectives correspond to the three instructional emphases: (1) Vocabulary and comprehension development, (2) decoding, or work attack skills, and (3) individualized reading.

The California Achievement Test is the principal measure for project evaluation. Both comprehension and vocabulary subscores were used. Seventy-five percent of the pupils are expected to show at least one month of growth for each month in the program. Those in Cycle 3 had an objective of two months growth because those cycles were shorter.

The Informal Reading Inventory, Croft, and Botel tests are designed and used for pupil placement and guidance. Criteria (percent of students to attain the objectives) were not appropriate for these measures.

A chart was kept of individual pupil reading, and a second objective was added to the independent reading area, namely for pupils to read two more books in the last month of instruction than in the first month.

Fifty-five pupils were sampled for attitude toward reading. Parent and teacher evaluations of the program were obtained.

Table II

Evaluation Design

Performance Objective	Instrument	Criterion
1. Improve vocabulary and comprehension one month for each month of instruction	1. California Achievement Test Vocabulary Comprehension 2. Informal Reading Inventory	75% of students Not Applicable
2. 80% accuracy in Word Attack Skills	1 Croft Word Attack System 2. Botel Phonics Inventory	Not Applicable Not Applicable
3. a) Pupils will read 10 books independently b) Pupils will read 2 more in last month than in first month of instruction	1. Chart of books read	Not Applicable Not Applicable
4. Pupils will improve their attitudes toward reading	1. Informal Attitudinal Survey	Not Applicable

III. Evaluation of Data

A. Achievement Testing

Table III shows the scores from the California Achievement Tests in Vocabulary and Comprehension. 78.4% and 81.8% respectively met the performance objectives. These percentages are above the 75% criterion so that the program clearly met its goal in this measure. The percentages meeting the performance objectives are also given by grade, by instructional team, and by cycle. All results but one were above 75%, which indicates that success was very uniformly distributed throughout the program.

Average gains were seven months for Vocabulary and eight months for Comprehension. For eleven weeks average, students in IRIT were gaining at a rate two to four times an average child not in the program. The average gains by grade, team, and cycle are much the same as for the program as a whole. The uniformity as well as the magnitude of success in IRIT is impressive.

All gains shown in Table III are statistically significant at the .01 level.

Nearly all of the students in the program (97.2%) were tested, so that the above results clearly reflect the program as a whole.

Table IV, section 2 shows that 99.8% and 99.0% of the students attained the performance objectives for word attack skills. Section 3 shows that 96% and 98.7% attained the objectives for independent reading.

Table III

Vocabulary and Comprehension Scores by Grade, Instructional Team, and Cycle

By Grade

		VOCABULARY					COMPREHENSION				
		Number Meeting		Mean Scores			Number Meeting		Mean Scores		
Grade	N	Objectives	%	Post	Pre	Months	Objectives	%	Post	Pre	Months
3	225	182	80.9	3.0	2.3	7	183	81.3	2.9	2.1	8
4	165	124	75.2	3.4	2.7	7	136	82.4	3.4	2.6	8
Total	390	301	78.4	3.2	2.5	7	319	81.8	3.1	2.3	8

By Team

		VOCABULARY					COMPREHENSION				
		Number Meeting		Mean Scores			Number Meeting		Mean Scores		
Team	N	Objectives	%	Post	Pre	Months	Objectives	%	Post	Pre	Months
A	131	100	76.3	3.1	2.4	7	111	84.7	3.2	2.3	9
B	129	104	80.6	3.0	2.3	7	108	83.7	2.8	2.1	7
C	130	102	78.4	3.5	2.8	7	100	76.9	3.4	2.6	8
Total	390	306	78.4	3.2	2.5	7	319	81.8	3.1	2.3	8

By Cycle

		VOCABULARY					COMPREHENSION				
		Number Meeting		Mean Scores			Number Meeting		Mean Scores		
Cycle	N	Objectives	%	Post	Pre	Months	Objectives	%	Post	Pre	Months
1	172	141	82.0	2.9	2.2	7	145	84.3	2.8	1.9	9
2	113	91	80.5	3.5	2.8	7	90	79.6	3.4	2.7	7
3	105	74	70.5	3.3	2.7	6	84	80.0	3.5	2.7	8
Total	390	306	78.4	3.2	2.5	7	319	81.8	3.1	2.3	8

Table IV

Percent of Pupils Meeting Performance Objectives

	Performance Objective	Instrument	% of pupils succeeding
1.	Improve vocabulary and comprehension one month for each month of instruction	C.A.T. Comprehension C.A.T. Vocabulary Informal Reading Inventory	81.8% 78.4% 99.7%
2.	80% accuracy in Word Attack Skills	Craft Word Attack System Botel Phonics Inventory	99.8% 99.0%
3a b	Pupils will read 10 books independently Pupils will read 2 more books in last month of instruction than in first month	Chart of books read	96% (15 books average) 98.7%
4.	Pupils will improve their attitudes toward reading	Informal Attitudinal Survey	"positive improvement" in a sample of 55 pupils

B. Attitude Survey

Table IV also shows the result of informal attitude surveys reported by the staff. Parents and regular classroom teachers of 55 IRIT pupils responded to a survey, and a sample of their remarks are on the following pages.

Classroom teachers found IRIT students improved in attitude and skills, The program also gave them more time to focus on children not in the program.

Parents sampled found their children's attitude toward reading improved. Their children were more interested in books and school. The vivid written responses to the surveys are subjectly persuasive. Parents of children not in the program made personal requests to have their children participants.

IV. Summary of Results

1. The program has exceeded its goals in all measures.

2. Vocabulary and Comprehension objectives were met by 78.4% and 81.8% of the pupils respectively, in relation to a goal of 75%.

3. Five other achievement objectives were met by 96% or more of the pupils.

4. Informal surveys of parents and classroom teachers indicate "positive improvement" of pupil attitude toward reading and school.

V. Recommendation

Continue the program as is.

VI. Appendix

A. Parent Evaluations 11

B. Typical Teacher Evaluations 14

PARENT EVALUATIONS OF THE IRIT PROGRAM

1) As a parent, did your child enjoy attending the Reading Program?

Much	-	250
Some	-	28
No answer	-	31

2) What did your child like about the reading school?

Reading different books.

All of it.

Fun and help him to read better.

The work that he does in the reading room and mostly spelling.

She talked about the program constantly. She liked the books and was especially fond of her teachers.

Teachers, reading books, SRA papers, learning new words, spelling, language master.

It helped him improve his reading.

Something interesting to do.

Working with words, and to read much faster.

She likes when the teachers help her to read .

The way she was taught to read.

Audio-visual aid and individual attention.

She liked the way each teacher helped her.

He liked typing, writing in cursive, reading and games after their work.

She said the teachers are nice, and they explain everything to you, so you can understand each word.

He likes the machines.

System 80.

2) continued

She enjoyed reading to the teacher and playing the games.

Language laboratory, sounds.

The teacher spent more time with him.

3) What did your child dislike about the reading school?

Nothing ....Nothing ....Nothing ....Nothing

Changing classes.

S.R.A.

The bussing.

Not anything.

4) How has your child's attitude toward reading changed?

She loves to read a lot more now that she attended the class.

He seems to enjoy reading more.

She has a much better attitude now than before. She also tries to read everything she sees on boxes, ads, etc.

She reads all the time.

More interested in reading.

A lot. She wants to read more and more.

She seems more enthusiastic about reading. She has started going to the library.

She has more confidence.

She enjoys reading more and now reads more smoothly.

She reads so much.

5) How has the reading program affected your child's attitude toward school in general?

She concentrates more.

He seems to be more relaxed about school now.

5) continued

Very good.

She is more interested in school now that her reading has improved.

Since her reading has improved, her other classwork has also improved. She understands her assignments and is able to complete her homework without any help most of the time.

Yes, I don't have any trouble about her wanting to go to school.

More interested in his work.

He looks forward to going to school every day.

6) Did you visit the Reading Program? Yes 74 No 229

No answer 6

7) How would you suggest that the reading program be improved?

I wish the program could be longer.

I can only say that the program has been very beneficial to my daughter. I have no idea of how it might be improved. To me, it is a great program.

Very good program.

I think it is at its best now.

TYPICAL TEACHER EVALUATIONS OF THE I.R.I.T. PROGRAM

1) What changes have you noticed in the skills of the children attending the IRIT? Describe briefly.

Better language arts and spelling skills.

Have significantly better phonetic skills.

Her ability to write stories, and particularly her spelling, has improved.

Completes assignments more readily. Enjoys reading independently in classroom.

They have a better understanding about what they are doing, and they perform with more concentration and comprehension.

The children seem to be more "outgoing".

More success completing the Follow-Through activities.

Reading skills greatly improved.

Their attitude is very much improved. Phonic awareness is also improved.

They are confident. Follow directions better. Word attack skills, comprehension have greatly improved.

Greater interest in reading and trying to read more difficult material.

Improvement in blends and digraphs. Improvement in identifying prefixes and suffixes.

2) What changes in the children's attitude toward reading did you notice?

They enjoy telling me about their IRIT work and reading to the other students.

Turn more frequently to reading on free time. Enjoy going to library to secure books for this purpose.

They seem to have a more positive attitude toward reading now.

2) continued

More motivated.

Try to compete with one another on how many Scholastic Readers they have read. Often try readers that are too difficult.

They do more independent reading now.

3) What behavioral changes have you noticed? Please specify.

All of the children have become more disciplined and independent.

In most, behavior is better.

More responsible toward school assignments.

During creative time, children seek library books.

They have become better workers - increased attention span.

Sit more quietly for longer periods. More success in reading board work.

Students seem to be calm and content after morning at IRIT.

4) Were you able to visit the IRIT Program to see it in action?

Yes 35 No 16

5) How many pupils remained with you during the A.M.?

Average number = 23

6) a) What affect did the IRIT Program have on the children who remained in your classroom?

I was able to carry out a more individualized language arts and reading program for them.

Gave time to work with remaining children more intensively and to provide much needed individual attention. Especially valuable in promoting written language skills through small-group work.

Helped very much. Children were able to ask me more questions more often.

6) continued
a)

Fantastic. Much more accomplished due to reduced class load.

Many of the children expressed a desire to attend the program.

6) b) What affect did removing some pupils from your classroom have on your program?

More time for diagnosing problems, etc.

It had a positive affect. The program ran much better because of the diminished numbers.

The children were able to do more independent work, particulary in creative writing.

7) How would you improve the IRIT? Describe briefly.

I wish it were possible for my other students to attend IRIT.

In no way. After observing it for two years, I feel it is an excellent opportunity for our 3rd graders.

Take some of the children who are and have been real failures in reading who are not L.D. Try teaching reading in Spanish.

I am an admirer of this program. Its model has served as a source and guide in the operation of my comprehension area for 80 3rd graders. I'm delighted IRIT exists.

Add a mathematics branch.

The teacher should have more input in the final selection of pupils to attend. She knows who should get a greater benefit from the program.

Perhaps longer in time, or perhaps more frequent classes to include more children.

I think it's a great program.

8) How have the pupil progress reports helped you?

It was helpful to know the skill development and needs of the children.

It gives me a more detailed, or varied, or widespread idea of areas to work in and achievement to be accomplished.

8) continued

In their placement upon returning to the room.

These are excellent!. Keep it up!.

Will save testing time (for placement) when they return.

They have helped to show me skills they were working on.

To give extra help in needed areas.